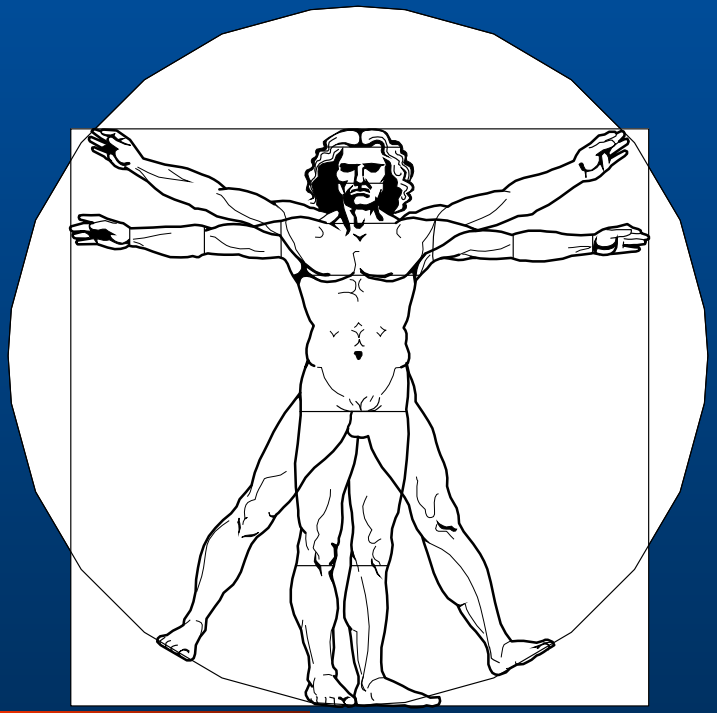
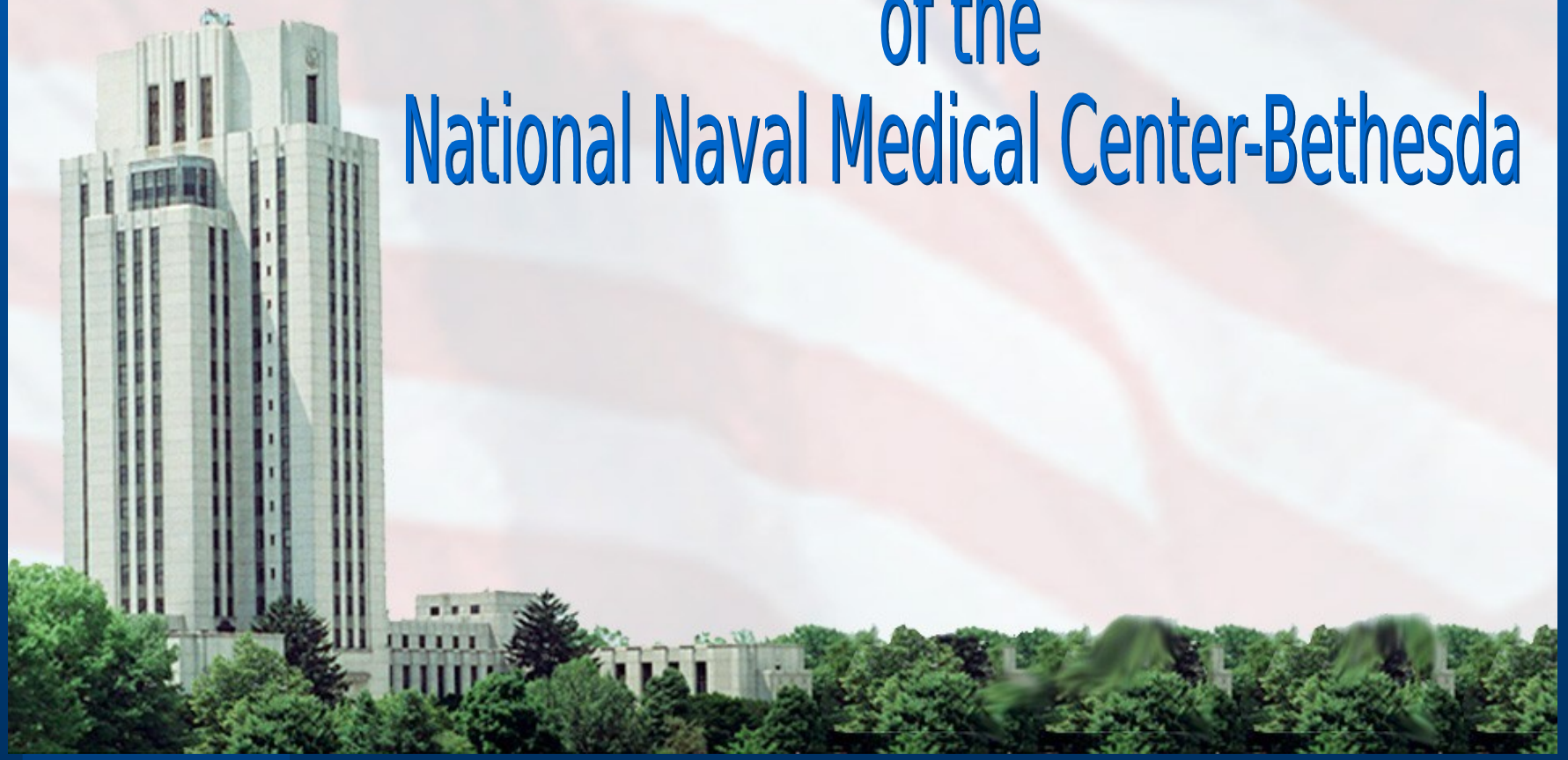
Neck Care Recommendations



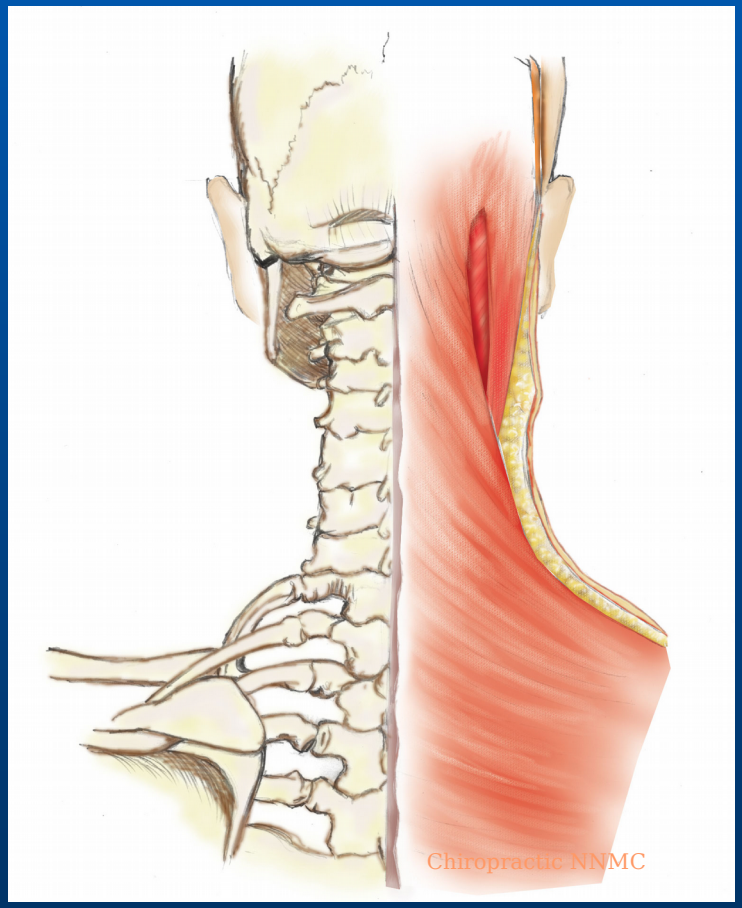
Presented by the Chiropractic Department of the National Naval Medical Center-Bethesda



Preventing disease is always preferable to treating disease.

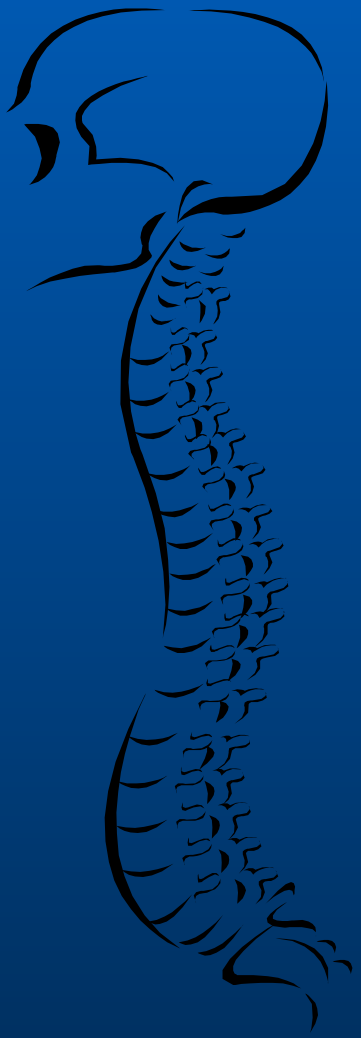
Severe degeneration in a 43 year old man.

The cervical spine (neck) is a marvelously complex structure that is characterized by strength and mobility.



Instructional goals:

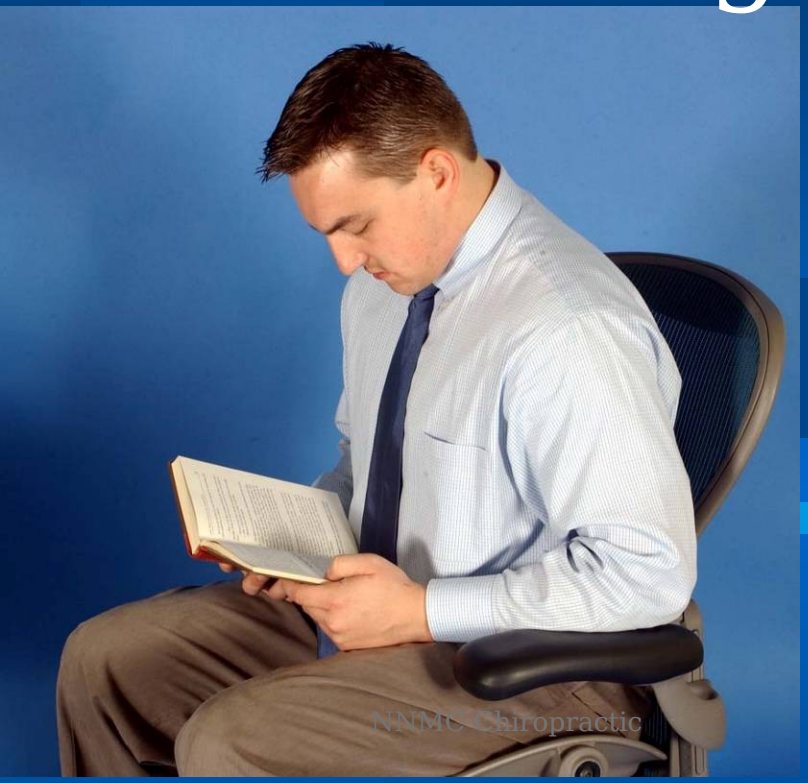
- To provide instruction in preserving the natural and optimal curve of the cervical spine
- To alert the viewer to deleterious postures and behaviors
- To introduce range-of-motion exercises



The Cervical “Lordosis”

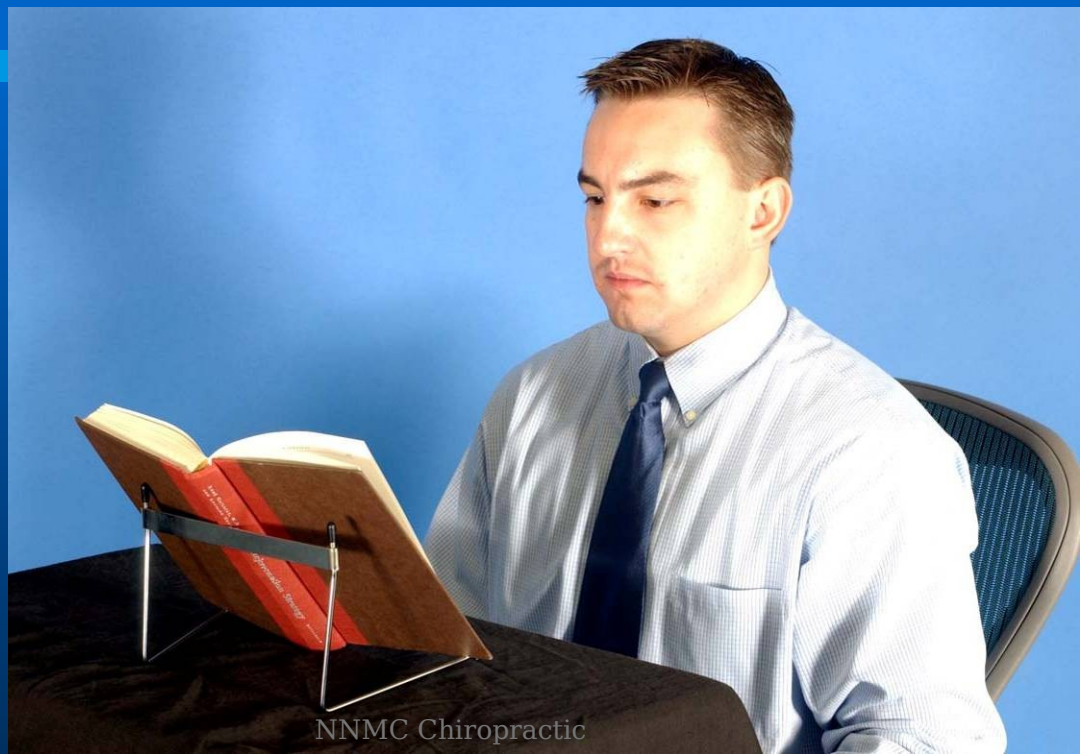
- When viewed from the side your neck should have a curve. This curve is called a “lordosis.”
- It is important that we maintain this curve throughout our daily activities.

Readin g



When possible avoid flexion (forward bending) of the neck.

The proper use of a book stand reduces neck flexion.



Phone Use

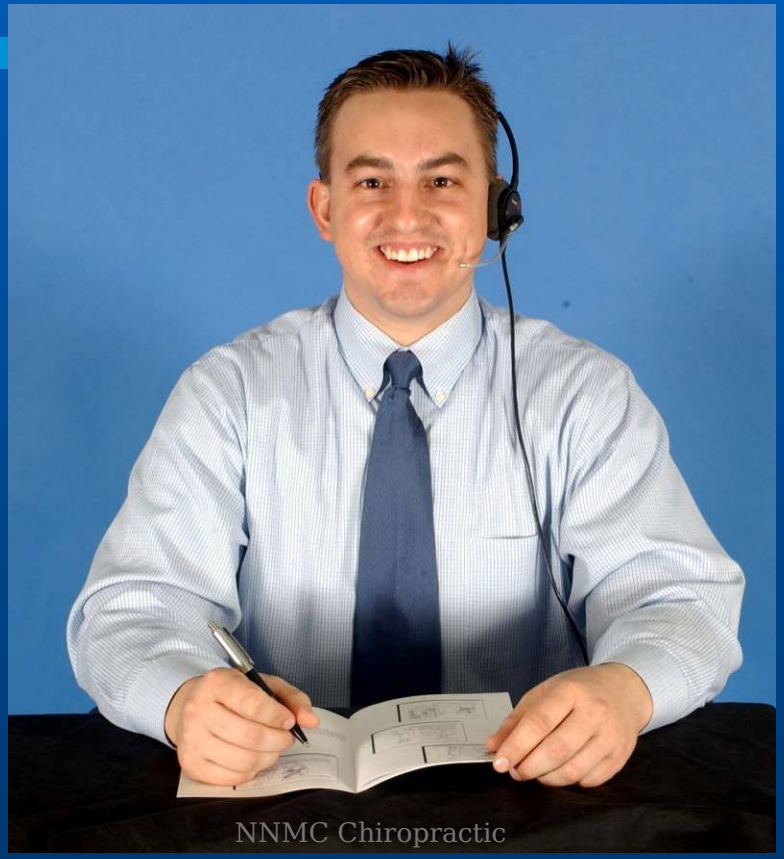
Avoid cradling the phone receiver between your shoulder and ear.

Phone Placement

- **If you place your phone on the non-dominant side (that would be the left side for right handed people) of your desk you will be less likely to cradle the phone with your shoulder. This is especially true if you write or “mouse” while on the phone.**

Phone Headsets

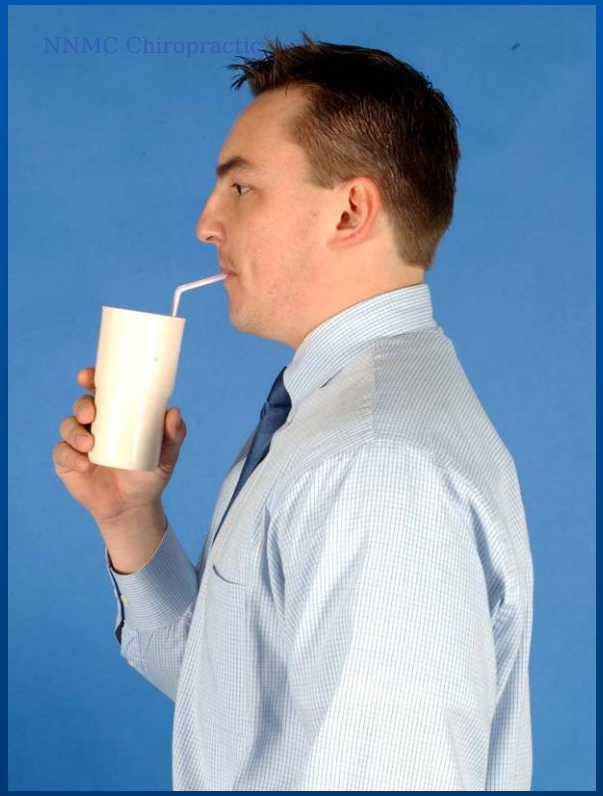
- **If you use the phone for long periods of time, you may benefit from the use of a headset.**
- **Headsets are available for home use, cordless phones and cell phones.**



When possible avoid working on a flat surface. Even a small amount of inclination will reduce stress on the neck.

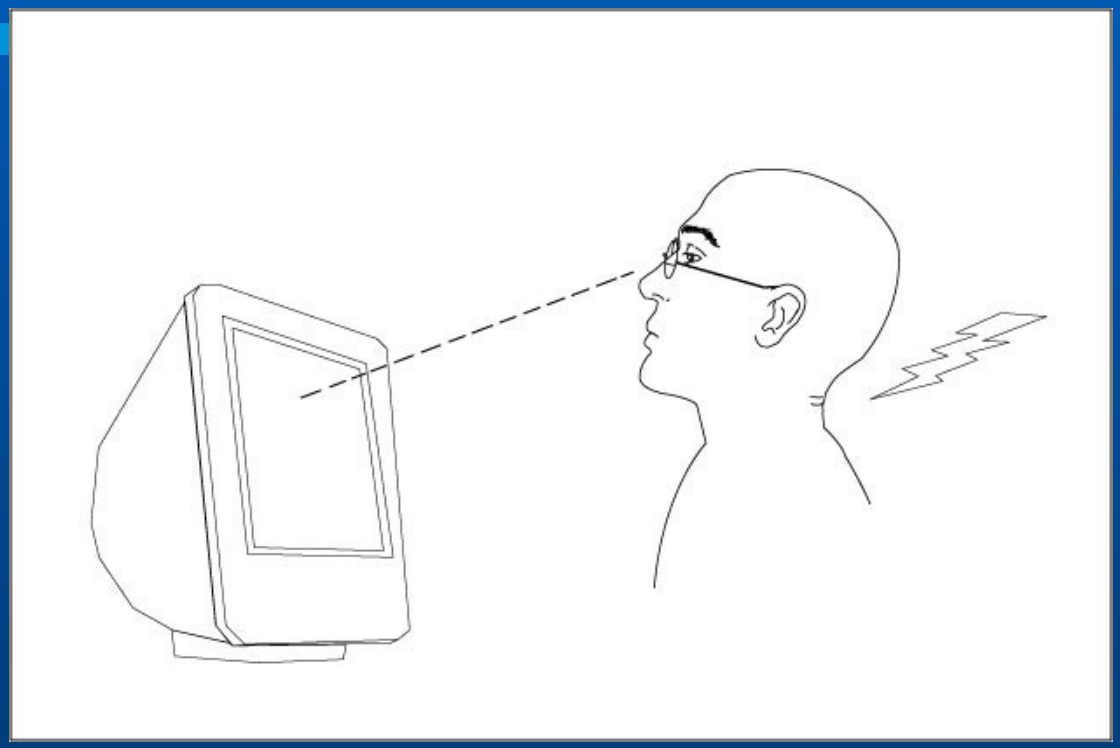
Even drinking can cause neck pain for those with a spinal condition.

- Those with neck pain or arthritis should avoid the extreme extension that drinking from a glass may cause.
- The use of a straw reduces stress on the neck.



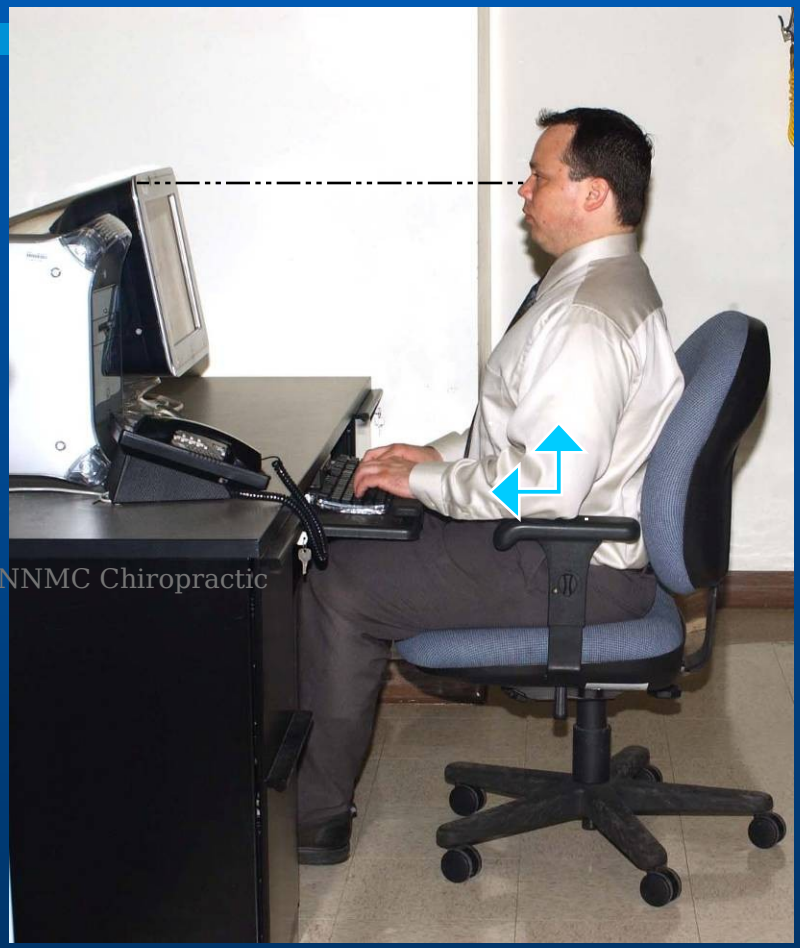
Bifocals & Neck Pain

- Cervical extension will provoke certain neck conditions. Those who use bifocals may extend their necks to view their computer monitors.
- This problem can be corrected by a prescription of computer-glasses or altering your screen height.



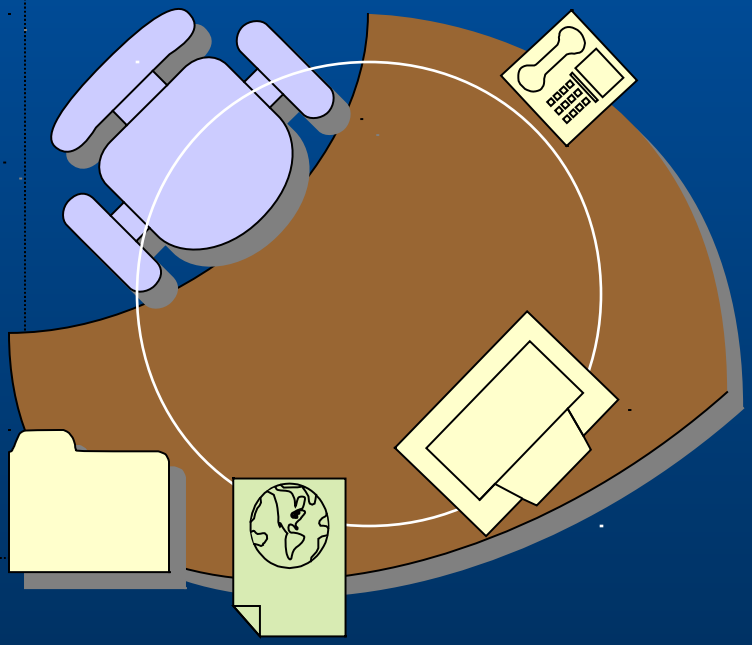
Adjust Your Work Area to Fit You

- The top of the monitor should be roughly level with your eyes.
- Your elbows should be bent to approximately 90 degrees.
- Your wrists should be straight, but not rigid.



Workspace Efficiency: The prioritized workstation reduces neck and back strain.

- Keep your work area free of clutter.
- Items that you use often should be within easy reach. You should not have to frequently stretch and strain to reach things.
- Do not “store” items (books, pictures or reference items) in your work area.
- Your phone should be out of the work area, but within easy reach. It should be placed on your non-dominant side—left side for right-handed workers.



Minimize All Overhead Lifting

- Avoid lifting overhead.
- If you must lift overhead, use a sturdy step stool or step ladder to reduce neck and back strain.

Balance Your Burdens

- Imbalanced loads can strain your neck and back.
- Try to balance and lighten your loads.

Backpacks

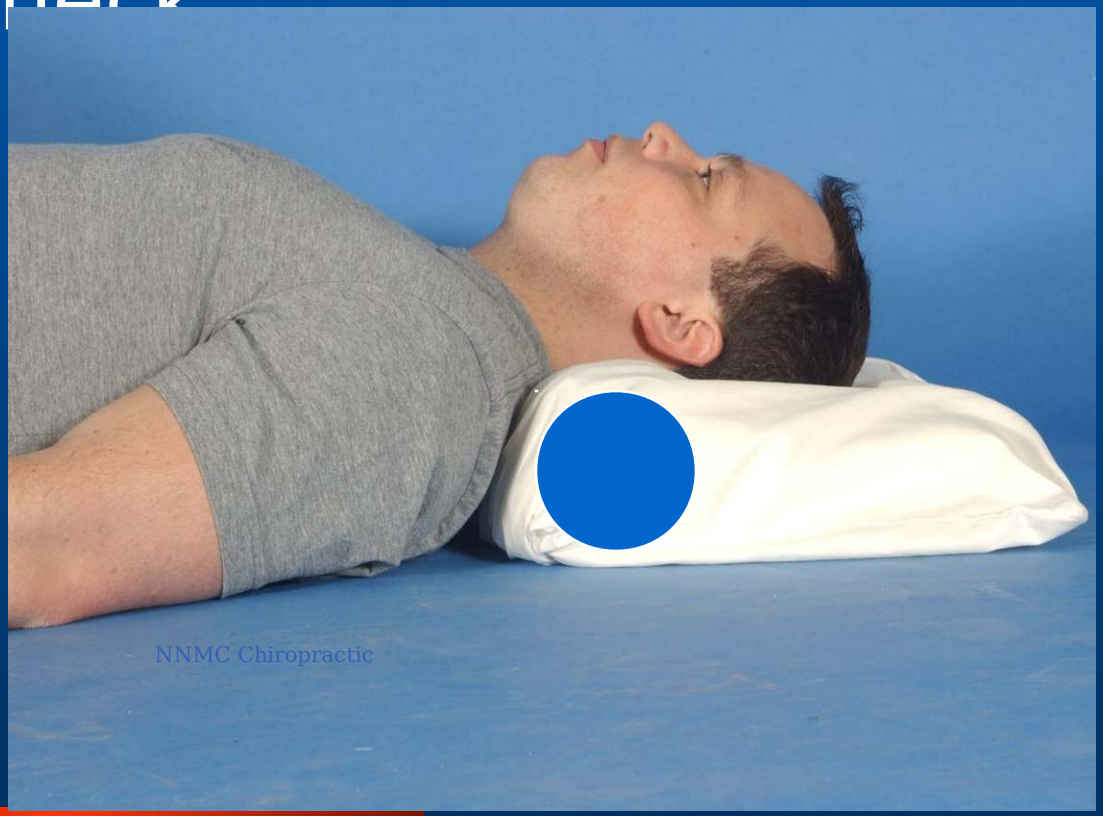
- Backpack straps should be worn on both shoulders.
- Excessive weight bearing should be avoided in backpacks.

Use mechanical aids to lift or move heavy items.

Avoid couches and unsupportive chairs.

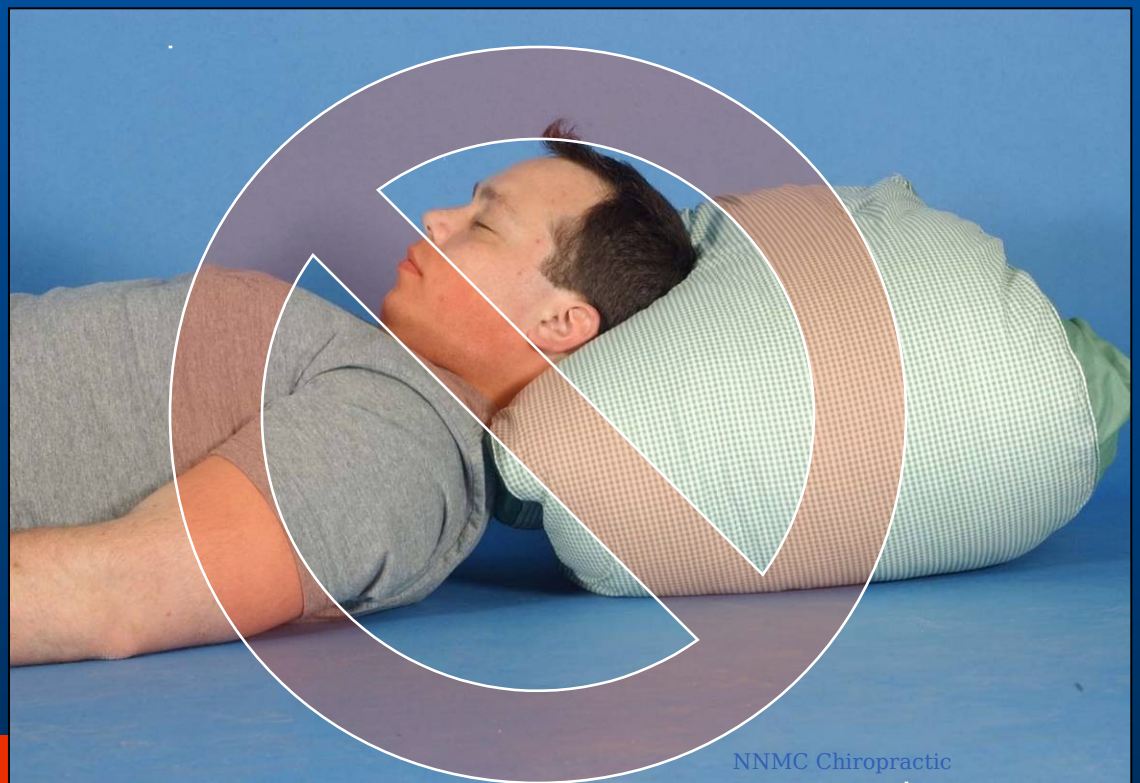
Sleeping

- Select a pillow that will support your neck



Sleeping

- Avoid sleeping with pillows bunched up under your neck.



Sleeping

- Sleeping on your side with your head in a neutral or aligned position is a recommended posture.
- Body pillows or buttresses may help reduce back and neck pain associated with sleeping.

Exercises to Maintain Neck Motion

These exercises are for illustrative purposes. Do not perform these or any exercises without the approval of a doctor.

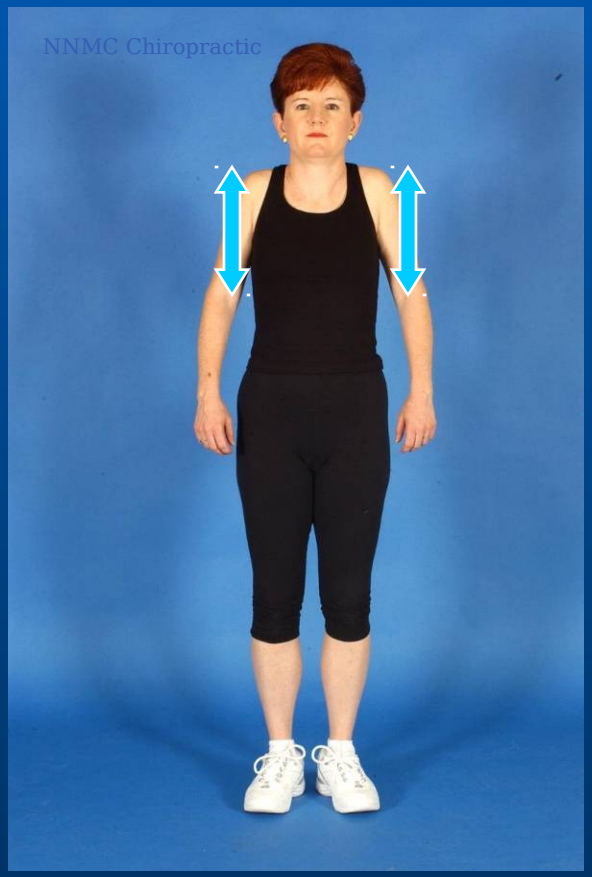
Lateral Flexion of Neck

NNMC Chiropractic

- Stand or sit looking straight ahead.
- Gently stretch your head and neck toward one of your shoulders until a comfortable stretch is felt in your neck.
- Hold for 8 seconds.
- Repeat this stretch on the opposite side.
- Perform three repetitions on each side.

Shoulder shrugs

- Stand looking straight ahead.
- Gently shrug your shoulders up and hold for 8 seconds.
- Relax and allow your shoulders to return to a natural position of carriage.
- Perform three repetitions.

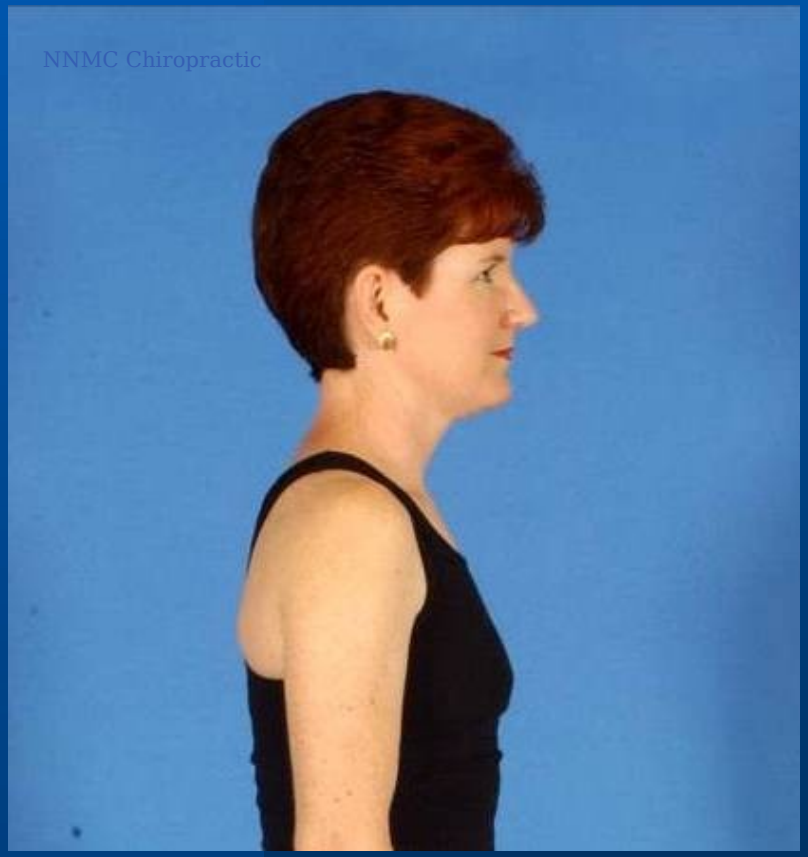


Cervical Rotations

- Stand or sit looking straight ahead.
- Gently rotate and stretch your head and neck to the side until a comfortable stretch is felt in your neck.
- Hold for 8 seconds.
- Repeat this stretch on the opposite side.
- Perform three repetitions on each side.

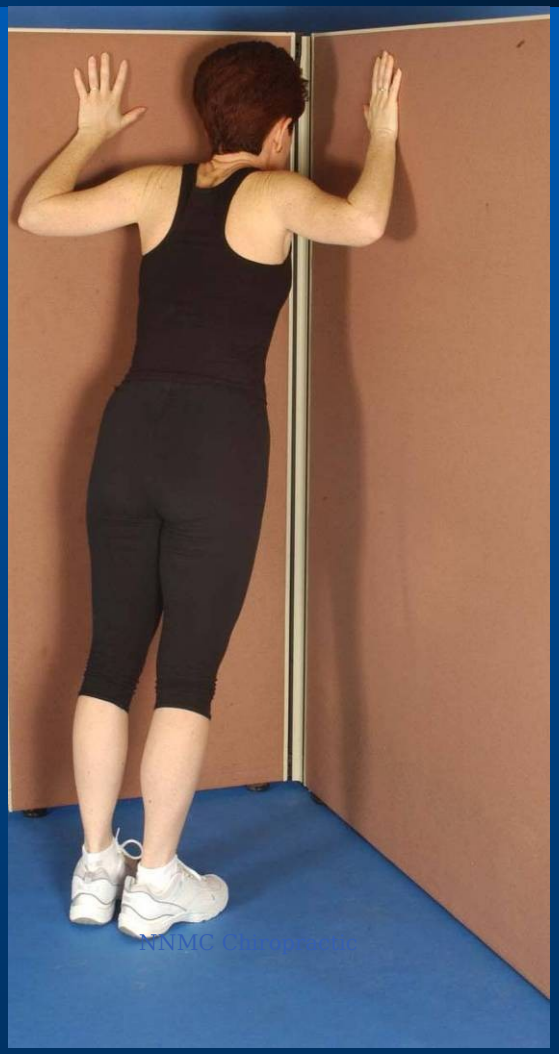
Cervical retractions

Slowly retract your chin back and hold for 15 seconds. Perform 4 repetitions.



Corner stretches

- Stand with your feet about 2 feet from a corner.
- Place your hands on the walls and slowly lean forward until a comfortable stretch is felt.
- Hold for 15 seconds.
- Perform three repetitions.

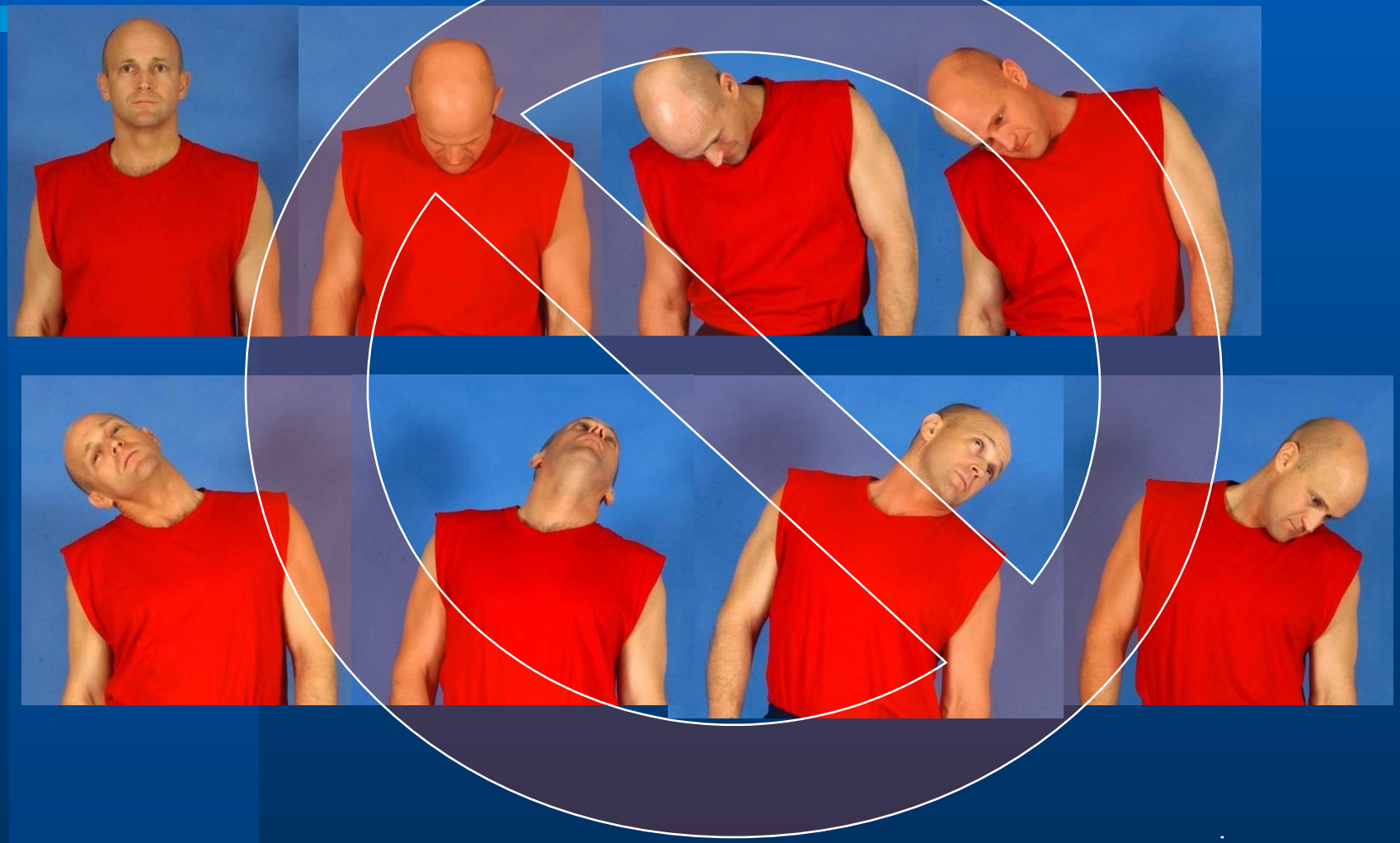


General Fitness:_

- **Aerobically exercise for thirty minutes three times per week.**

Do not start any exercise program without the consent of your doctor.

Avoid this exercise: neck rotations

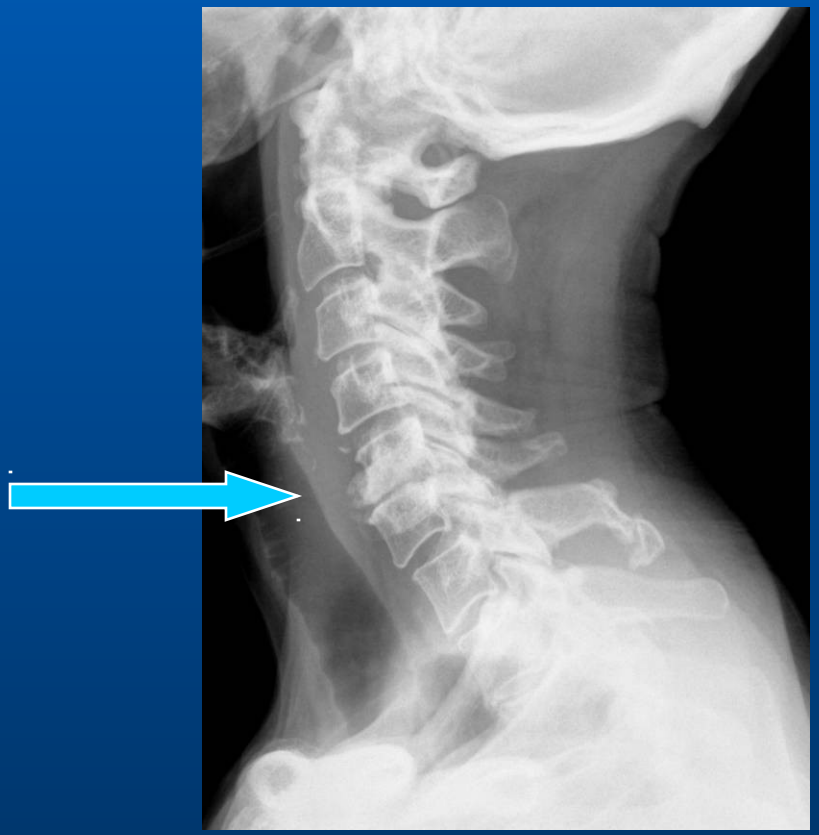


Exercises that extend the neck to an extreme degree should be avoided.

Other Exercise Warnings:

- Do not perform behind the neck weight lifting exercises such as behind-the-neck presses or behind-the-neck pull-downs.
- Do not interlace your fingers behind your neck for sit-ups.
- Do not jerk your head while performing stomach exercises.
- Avoid contact sports.
- Do not perform wrestler “bridging” exercises.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”



This X-ray reveals arthritis of the neck

To make an appointment with Bethesda's Chiropractic Department call (301) 295-6289